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# MNF-I Command Chaplain's Newsletter



*Serving you while you serve the  
Multi-National Forces in Iraq*

# MNF-I

## Command Chaplain

### Greeting to RSTs in Iraq



By Chaplain (COL) Lilton J. Marks

It's Fathers' Day and the whole gang is home; my daughter, two sons, and the oldest grandchild. These parents are accompanied by their children, my seven other grandchildren and a great-grandson. Oh yes, there is also the adopted family with parents and two children. Twenty-two in all filled the house – what a day, what a weekend and what a time! This was truly an active time, and there were moments that I would sneak-off and get some quiet time to myself. This gathering served as our annual time together as a family. But this gathering was different than the others because everyone came to bid me farewell as I prepared to deploy to Iraq.

The flight from Norfolk, VA to Baltimore, MD, to meet the AMC flight was uneventful, that is, until I tried to recover my bags and discovered that my civilian duffel bag was missing. The airline had damaged my duffel and had transferred some of the contents to another duffel bag and put it on the turnstile which I only discovered after a frantic look through all pieces of luggage left on the turnstile. Well, the rest of this story is – after an hour or more of dealing with the airline agents - I emerged with a meager compensa-

tion, wet and heavily soiled clothes, and missing and damaged items. I had missed the NLT time to report to the AMC desk by thirty minutes and just could not deal with the airlines any longer (I now think they knew this so they were slow in serving me, waiting for me to give-up and leave).

Off to the AMC desk to find a line a mile long (well so much for hurrying up). My first thought was to go back to the airline and get my fair share for the damages they had done. Ah! It is not worth the effort, and if I got out of line, the line would only get longer. So, I settled down and proceeded to check in like everyone else.

The flight to Kuwait City via Frankfurt, GE and Aviano, IT was long and lonely. Oh yes, there were the VIP lounges to retreat to, but they only added to the loneliness, and I preferred to hang-out with the rest of the lonely passengers. Finally, I landed in Kuwait City on 28 June at 1:30 Hrs, 95 degrees, pitch dark, and totally disoriented. We were put on buses and moved to a holding area where we joined with five hundred other military and civilians waiting, waiting, and waiting. After about an hour and a half, the Kuwaiti Police showed up to escort us to Camp Doha for in-processing.

There was only one flight to Baghdad on 28 June and, needing to draw RFI equipment, I missed that flight. I checked around (like an industrious Soldier would) and attempted to get on a flight to Balad with the intent of hitch-hiking a ride on a MEDEVAC Chopper to 86<sup>th</sup> CSH and then on to Camp Victory. The old Soldier in me said you are here now, so get to work, therefore I needed to get to Camp Victory ASAP. The LNOs found out about my intentions

and became very nervous, being afraid that they would lose the new MNF-I Command Chaplain. They insisted that I not go to Balad. I thought better of my plans and waited for the next day's flight to Baghdad.

Boom! I am in Baghdad, I am in Camp Victory, and I am in the heat and dust. But most importantly as I look around, I see Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen and civilians everywhere. I SEE MINISTRY!!!!

Why am I talking about my journey to Baghdad since it was not much different than anyone else's trip who has journeyed here? Many lose their bags, many bags are damaged by the airlines. Everyone experiences a certain level of loneliness and stress on the long flight over. Camp Doha does not remedy those feelings. And, as for Camp Victory, Baghdad, the heat and the dust...well...WE ARE ALL IN IT TOGETHER!

So, why the story? Am I complaining and whimping-out?

After over forty years with the Army (active and reserve time) including twenty-one years as an Army Chaplain, this story affirms my Call to Ministry. Since 1984, God has been instrumental in placing me where He needed me for His service. I know that this is more than just another assignment, instead it is a Call to support ministry to men and women who serve for the freedom and dignity of the Iraqi people and to honor their commitment to their nation.

As the MNF-I Command Chaplain, I am committed to quality pastoral care for the women and men (military and civilians) serving in Iraq and to advising and assisting the Command in realizing its strategic goals of bringing peace and stability to Iraq; and enabling the Iraqi people to become self-reliant.

I look forward to the next twelve months with great optimism and confidence. I am here to serve!!

May God bless and keep us all in His care as we struggle for peace, dignity and freedom for humanity.

## Shalom to You!



By Chaplain (CDR) Mitchell M. Schranz

I am the new kid on the block at MNF-I and look forward to working with the great people that make up our RSTs here in Iraq. My home unit is CNE-C6F, homeported in Naples, Italy, where my wife and children remain during this deployment. Working at the Fleet level you run into some real hard-chargers. You know the type: people running at full throttle and barely have time to give you a grunt when you wish a Good Morning to them. It is sad that we can all easily fall into the trap of putting paperwork and projects before people. Sometimes we forget how important it is just to be a warm and approachable figure in our units. God knows I have fallen into this hole myself. Then I think about an incident that happened and still remains with me, and probably a number of others as well...

Years ago I was riding a crowded subway in New York City. The train was going from uptown to midtown during the morning rush hour. As usual, some people were sleeping, some reading the newspaper, some doing the crossword, some just staring into space wishing they were back home in their warm bed. No one spoke. No one had the look of a happy camper on their face.

Then the conductor got on the public address system. In addition to announcing the stops, he went far beyond. He gave us little factoids about the famed landmarks overhead that we were racing

by. He updated us on the weather conditions outside and reminded people to be careful as they exited on the platform because “we want to see you back tomorrow.”

His voice was warm and friendly, just like an old uncle. As he spoke you could see the jaded New Yorkers waking up and paying attention. People looked alive and started to talk to one another about the conductor. No one left the subway without a big grin. It made our day.

Too often we live in our own bubble, getting so caught up in our problems and needs that we forget the simple things that are so important. “Small” things like wishing our fellow soldier or shipmate a good day. Like smiling because life is a great gift to enjoy. Like noticing all the landmarks we run across instead of racing past them. Like saying thank you and really meaning it. Like letting ourselves just be human.

In a tube of steel going sixty mph on a cold New York morning, I learned a powerful lesson from that subway conductor and his warmth continues to cheer me. May his example inspire us in our *Ministry of Presence* to all!

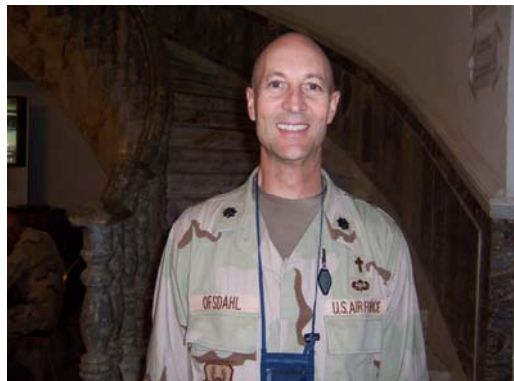
*The fear of The Lord is the instruction of wisdom;*

*And before honor goes humility.*

**--PROVERBS 15:33**

***God bless and stay great!***

## Helping Hands



By Chaplain (LTC) Scott A. Ofsdahl

“She had holes in the upper chamber of her heart. Though the defects are commonly repaired in the United States, doctors in Iraq were unable to help.” (CH Steven Holly)

A humanitarian mission was handed off to the new chaplain: complete the goal of arranging heart surgery for a five year old girl from a nearby Iraqi town. Her name was Noor and she sang a song about being sick: “my heart, my heart...cure my heart.” So where do we begin? Is this even appropriate for RST involvement? Joint Pub 3-57 gives us a hint, “When appropriate, and in coordination with the CMOC...chaplain assists by providing advice on the distribution of FHA supplies arriving from churches and other religious organizations.” If we decide to support a humanitarian operation such as the one mentioned above – where do we begin?

The MNF-I Command Chaplain Office in coordination with the National Iraqi Assistance Center, Civil Affairs and CMOC are striving to provide answers to these questions. Our joint efforts serve to promote mission legitimacy and enhance unity of effort. Our goal is to develop strategic guidance for RSTs interested in supporting humanitarian operations. Two hands helping are better than just one. Our efforts to support education, protect hu-



man rights, and distribute health care items mirror CMOC operations. We are beneficiaries of donations amounting in the millions of dollars. Imagine yoking arms strategically with organizations that sent 58 Iraqi patients for medical treatment outside Iraq this past year? Or perhaps gaining access to a new prosthetic workshop that measures, molds, fits and rehabilitates Iraqis! The advantage to our RSTs is access to country wide assistance. Our collaborative effort would ensure support so that CA assets and RSTs are working at their fullest potential. Together we can better determine the receipt of bulk donations, coordinate delivery of goods and wisely select the most worthy beneficiaries. Inter-office coordination and information sharing is a force multiplier in our joint effort to broaden our humanitarian acts of kindness.

Chaplain Miller and Chaplain Holly, in the case of five year old Noor, worked five months to just find out what to do. Then the issues of getting accurate medical records, securing funding, completing the paperwork, contacting the Humanitarian Operations Center in Kuwait and finally securing the transportation presented an almost insurmountable obstacle. But together, the chaplains and CA representatives accomplished the mission. And together, we can now develop lessons learned and SOP for a variety of humanitarian projects. Stay tuned as a Strategic Plan for Chaplain/Humanitarian/CMO coordination for missions is developed. In the end, we are all winners as together we seek to glorify God and bring blessings to all people. In the words of Noor's father: "When I go back, I will tell my people that American people are friendly to the Iraqi people, as I have seen for myself, I will explain a lot that the Americans are not our enemies, but they are our friends." (Portland Herald)

## News You can use from the Embassy

### What do I do first?



#### By Chaplain (LTC) Jerry Powell

Setting priorities in ministry is a difficult mission. Keeping your focus requires attentive determination to stay on track. How do you decide what are your priorities? We all know that your boss probably has priorities, but are yours the same?

I developed a questionnaire to help me determine what is really important in my job. My work priorities are different than my personal life's goals. This questionnaire helps me focus on the important tasks of my job rather than to be swallowed by the urgent.

The first question to ask yourself is, "What is your MOST important responsibility in this job? If this part of my job fell through, I would not be successful?" The answer to this question will help you determine your primary focus. This may not be where you necessarily spend the most of your time or your energy, but it will be the one thing that if it does not get done, you will not be successful in your time here.

The second part of the questionnaire will help reveal where you enjoy spending your energy. "What three areas do you find the most rewarding in your present position?" You may find that you

are most rewarded in areas that fit your personality and your style of work. We can be very different in our makeup and may find rewarding areas that are different from one another. I find that when my reward is in a different area than a co-worker, I can get irritated that they do not do the things that I think they should be doing. Office conflict can arise not because we are opposed to the other's work, but that we don't find their efforts to be in the same area of rewards that we enjoy.

"When you return to the States, what part of your job will you be most pleased to tell others about?" The ministry and help that we provide to others can be very rewarding. If a particular ministry or activity is what you will be most pleased to talk about, then that may indicate what one of your top priorities may be. That indicates what you find rewarding and where you are more likely to invest your energy.

The next part of the questionnaire is the reverse of the earlier question: "What three areas are the most unrewarding or difficult for you in this job?" The answer to this question may help you realize what important parts of your job you may avoid or not get done. Areas of your job that you avoid may be important and yet, if you find them unfulfilling, you never seem to have the energy or interest to get them done. You can get behind, not because you are incapable, but because you are uninterested. This leads to frustration. "What is most frustrating part of this job for you?" is another way to address why you may get upset at work or with those around you. If part of your effort is frustrating, then avoiding that becomes common. My tendency is to gravitate to what I enjoy and avoid what is upsetting or frustrating. By avoiding the frustrating part of a mission day, we actually pile up a subconscious "to do" list that becomes more and more foreboding. Then we can actually become depressed when we realize all of the "I don't

want to do that" pile in our mental inbox. That is when work becomes drudgery. There are parts of all our jobs that just must get done, regardless of how annoying they may be. Knowing what frustrates us and tackling it up front can help realign our priorities and free us to do the things we enjoy more.

How do we move from not enjoying parts of our necessary work to getting it all done without all of the frustrations? First, I think that we need to decide if we need help in administrative or management skills. The question you should ask is, "If I could receive help in any area of my management abilities, what would it be?" Honesty about our own abilities is sometimes hard to realize. We must know our weaknesses so that we can better develop them into strengths. Much of our life and ministry is self motivated and self energized. There is not someone to tell you exactly how to manage your time and efforts. That can be a problem if we avoid some work and embrace other work, because we can stay busy, but may not be productive. Ask for help from those who know you and work with you. Even if you are the boss, ask subordinates for creative ways to attack an issue. Give them ownership and they can help you through the frustrations as part of the team. Humility is required: plus a desire to truly excel. You cannot do it alone and the team approach can always be more profitable.

## SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR

### National Guard Promotions, Where Have They Gone?



By MSG Edgar Epps

Everyone who dons the uniform seeks promotion to the next higher grade or rank at some point in their careers. It is thought promotions that we find our greatest rewards; it gives the individual a sense of belonging, a feeling of self-worth, and a certain swagger emanating from a feeling of immense self-confidence. Being promoted offers the service member a tangible gratification of success and achievement. Along with promotions service members are able to provide a stable household for their families, invest the extra earnings toward retirement, and save for their children's education. It's when service members perceive that these promotions are few and far between that people raise questions of equity within the system.

During a recent visit with some units here in Iraq, several National Guard Chaplain's Assistants inquired about the promotions system. They wanted to know why they weren't receiving the promotions that their peers were receiving? They asked, since we are federalized why aren't we receiving our fair share of promotions? These soldiers believe that their peers at home are receiving

valued promotions and they were being ignored. Many of these questions may have been due in response to the recent Department of The Army directive allowing Specialist (E-4), those who qualify, to be placed on the promotions list with a minimum of 350 points.

SGM Robert Parr, the Reserve Component Division, Senior Enlisted Advisor located at Camp Victory stated that "there are 54 states and territories that govern National Guard Personnel...and each one operates differently." Each state has its own unique force structure allotted to the by Headquarters Department of the Army. However, "according to the NGR 600-200, chapter 11 the promotion authority for National Guard personnel still resides with the State despite federalization." The National Guard promotes against vacancies within each state and the individual must be on a standing Promotions List (PL). Once the vacancies are announced the individual with the lowest sequence number, E-5 thru E-8, will be offered the vacancy.

In Addition, a deployed soldier may get promoted if there is a vacancy in their home state according to SGM Parr. However, if the unit is scheduled to be mobilized and the soldier to be promoted is already deployed he/she cannot get promoted against the vacancy. The unit will look for another qualified soldier to promote against the vacancy and often cross level volunteers from other states and the Individual Ready Reservists to fill the vacancy.

Milper Message Number: 02-123 dated 26 March 2002 entitled "*Clarification of Junior Enlisted Promotion Policy for Soldiers Mobilized and Affected By Stop Loss*" outlines the promotion criteria for commanders of deployed Guard and Reserve Soldiers. Paragraph 4 (a) states that "commanders exercising UCMJ authority for Army Reserve and National Guard Soldiers...will advance soldiers in their units to grades E-2 thru E-4." Commanders are re-

quired to use established criteria in AR 600-8-19 Active Component *Enlisted Promotions and Reductions* as a guide for these promotions.

A promotion has always been a measure of a service member's hard and competent work, especially during these difficult times in the War against Terrorism. Many soldiers feel that promotions are a just compensation for the long grueling deployments and time spent away from their family and

loved ones. There are no easy solutions to the many questions, as SGM Parr states "my sole function is to help soldiers...I'm proud to be a guardsman and serve here with them". For more information on National Guard promotions contact SGM Robert Parr. He may be reached at DSN (318) 822-1728.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: Is there any guidance on how to handle holy items?

A: Yes – MNF-I has guidance for all personnel on proper handling of religious property during military operations and off-duty. All personnel will treat religious or ecclesiastical property of any religion or faith group with appropriate respect. In this region, common items of religious or ecclesiastical property include the Koran. You may also encounter Islamic items such as the Koran, prayer beads, and prayer mats, during military operations; here is a list of recommendations on how to respect items that you may find helpful.

When possible, handle Korans, prayer beads, and prayer mats with clean gloves.

When possible, handle them with both hands, primarily using the right hand for manipulation.

Handle the items as you would handle a fragile piece of art.

When possible, avoid placing the items in offensive areas such as the floor, near the toilet or sink, near the feet, or in dirty/wet areas.

When possible, do not step on prayer mats or other religious articles. Step over or around them and if moving a prayer rug or mat is necessary, treat with respect and drape the mat over furniture.

Questions regarding the identification and proper treatment of religious or ecclesiastical property of all faiths may be directed to your servicing Unit Ministry Team. The MNF-I Command Chaplain's office is the point of contact for this guidance, DSN (318) 822-1647.

**To submit questions for MNF-I Chaplain contact RP1 George at  
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